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State offers support for farmers

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[Kevin Rader](#)/Eyewitness News



LtGov. Becky Skillman, right

Indianapolis - Indiana agriculture has taken a major hit due to the recent storms and flooding.

Farms and agriculture businesses are struggling to get back into production. Wednesday, one Columbus company succeeded. Now, the state is offering [extra support](#) for farmers.

Three weeks ago, Mariah Foods was destroyed by the flood. Lt. Gov. Becky Skillman said she couldn't believe her eyes Wednesday when the business was back on line.



"Had to be exciting to see the first product roll through. The first house is cooking over there. Tomorrow morning you should be able to box the bacon," said Mariah Foods General Manager Tom Sutton.

Mariah Food, a pork manufacturing company in Columbus, produces seven to 800,000 pounds of bacon, sausage, and ham every day. It suffered \$5 million in damage and had to lay off approximately 130 workers.



"We are hoping to have all 224 back in a couple of weeks. If we get that done it will be amazing," said Sutton.

Lt. Gov. Skillman visited just days after the destruction. She came back Wednesday to see how far it had come.

Agriculture contributes \$25 billion to the Indiana economy. Getting it back on track is a top priority. State Treasurer Richard Mourdock unveiled his \$50 million restoration aid program for damaged earthen dams, levies, and farmland.

"This is important because until these structures get restored Indiana farmland is going to be kept out of production," said Mourdock.

"This program helps them fix their land. We've got so much debris and sediment buildup," said Indiana Agriculture Director Andy Miller.

Farmers can go to their local bankers to apply for loans of 2.75% interest in order to put up the 25% required to secure matching federal money.

"It's attractive and farmers who need loans for this purpose would be foolish not to seek this rather than money through a commercial rate," said Bob Kraft of Farm Bureau.

State Treasurer Richard Mourdock admitted that if it weren't for the state's current fiscal

condition he would not be able to earmark \$50 million from the general fund for this purpose.



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